THAT THEY GO FORWARD

AN IMPRESSION OF THE OXFORD CONFERENCE ON CHURCH, COMMUNITY AND STATE.

By

ERIC FENN

42

TERNATIONAL
CHRISTIAN
UDY CENTRE
BRARY

**LIBRARY OF THE
WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

**BIBLIOTHÈQUE
DU CONSEIL ŒCUMÉNIQUE**

This book must be returned not later than
Ce livre doit être rendu au plus tard à la date inscrite ci-après

21822

THAT THEY GO FORWARD

280.242
F 36 t
copy 1

THAT THEY GO FORWARD

AN IMPRESSION OF THE OXFORD CONFERENCE ON CHURCH, COMMUNITY AND STATE

BY

ERIC FENN

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE OXFORD CONFERENCE

STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT PRESS
58 BLOOMSBURY STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

WORLD'S COMMITTEE
LIBRARY
World Council of Churches
17, route de Malagnou, GENEVA

First Published January 1938

Printed in Great Britain

PREFACE

THIS book has been written by request in order to make some of the findings of the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State in July, 1937, available in short, simple and cheap form to younger people, and especially those preparing for the International Conference of Christian Youth in 1939. My own part in the Oxford Conference was almost entirely "below decks," in frantic preoccupation with the machinery, as it groaned under the unfortunate results of the Tower of Babel. But, both before the Conference and since, my work has entailed a close attention to the "literature of the Conference," and especially to the task of reducing it to book form. I have therefore drawn on this admittedly somewhat painful experience in seeking to make the issues plain.

I was asked to write for the "average intelligent person of twenty-five years of age." Whether that mythical figure will recognise the book as his own I cannot say. At least it may be a step towards that simplification that is so sorely needed. I was asked also to write not only for Great Britain, but for the continent of Europe, America, and the Far East. That is an even taller order! To make my meaning plain, I have had to refer specifically to countries such as Italy, Germany and Russia,

which no Englishman is supposed to understand. I hope that at least I have shown the desire to understand, and above all that I have indicated clearly that the crisis of the Church is universal and, therefore, no less real in the democracies than elsewhere. Finally, I was asked to do all this within the limits of a book that should cost " one shilling, or at the most two shillings." The obscurity that may well be discovered in the writing results from this limitation, even though I have been driven to the upper limit of price.

I have drawn chiefly on two books. Chapters II, IV, V and VI are presentations of the work of the Conference, as contained in the official Report, with the minimum of explanatory comment. Chapter III is an attempt to express in simpler language part of what is admirably written in the chapter on the Church and the World in *The Church and its Function in Society*, by Oldham and 't Hooft. Chapter VII is based both on the report of the section of the Conference that dealt with Education and, still more, on some of the contributions to the volume on Education in the Church, Community and State series. This chapter has less direct reference to the Report than the others, and in order to relate the discussion more immediately to young people, I have attempted to write a chapter of my own on the basis of the material available rather than to give quotations.

This little book is an absurd impertinence. It has only one excuse : that its sole aim is to make people read other books ! In particular, for anyone who wants to understand what the Oxford

Conference was about, *The Church and its Function in Society*, and *The Churches Survey Their Task* (the official Report) are indispensable. The six other volumes listed in the Appendix contain some of the most stimulating material that has ever come my way. It is my hope merely to point the way to the mine, not to offer alloy in place of gold.

To express thanks, as an author should, is beyond me and beyond the limits of the space available. The people to whom I am indebted are far too numerous. Let me cover my confusion by saying that to those who were in any way associated with " Oxford, 1937," and especially to Dr J. H. Oldham, I owe more than even another book could convey.

ERIC FENN

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
World Council of Churches

https://archive.org/details/wcclifework075

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	5
I.	THE HOPE OF UNITY	11
II.	THE NEMESIS OF DISUNITY	23
III.	ARMY OR RABBLE?	33
IV.	QUESTIONS OF BREAD AND BUTTER	43
V.	MEN OF A DOUBLE LOYALTY	57
VI.	THE CHURCHES AMID INTERNATIONAL DISORDER	68
VII.	BOND OR FREE?	81
VIII.	THAT THEY GO FORWARD	94
	APPENDIX: The Literature of the Conference	103

THAT THEY GO FORWARD

CHAPTER I

THE HOPE OF UNITY

THE vast space inside St Paul's Cathedral was almost completely filled on Thursday, 28th July 1937. People had come from all over London. Outside, a crowd of curious Londoners watched the procession emerge from the crypt and pass slowly into the West Door. Inside, the congregation stood while the varied ranks of robed dignitaries moved to their places: Eastern Orthodox with their flowing robes and impressive beards, Anglican bishops and priests in surplice and scarf, the Geneva gowns of the Reformed Churches, the fascinating white ruffs of the Lutherans; venerable representatives from the Syrian Church in South India; Chinese in their simple silk robes or in academic dress; an Indian in white; the dark, kindly faces of American negroes. Then followed the Lord Mayor's Procession, conducted by the Dean and Cathedral Clergy. Finally, the small group of officiating clergy, preceded by the Choir, took their places in the Chancel, and the service began:

"The Almighty and Eternal God, whose glory the heavens declare, and who has made manifest His holiness and love in Jesus Christ, has now in

His Providence called us together—people from many nations who in divers manners but with one single faith confess His Name and worship Him alone, that united in adoration, we may as one fellowship pray and take counsel for the good of His Church and in preparation for the coming of His Kingdom. Let us therefore lift up our hearts to Him in prayer in words which He has taught us, and in praise, ascribing to Him all Majesty and Dominion, and offering to Him the homage of our hearts and lives."

So a great and varied company, representative of all the main Christian Churches, except Rome, and of forty-five nations, knelt and said the Lord's Prayer at the opening of the Service of Thanksgiving, Penitence and Intercession. The service papers were in French, German and English. The service itself was conducted by representatives of different nations and Christian traditions. It moved forward to the common affirmation of faith in the Nicene Creed; to the sermon by the Archbishop of Canterbury; to the singing of the *Te Deum*. A body of men and women, whose nations and whose Churches had been separate for centuries, whose different histories contained elements of strife and persecution, met to seek in the presence of God that forgiveness and renewal in which is the hope of Christian Unity.

These were the delegates to the two World Conferences held in Great Britain this summer. Some had just come from a fortnight's heavy work in Oxford, discussing the questions at issue between

the Church, the Community and the State; others were about to undertake a similar piece of work in Edinburgh on questions of Faith and Order, seeking to overcome, or at least understand better, the differences that still sunder Church from Church. They were joined in worship by members of London churches and the Lord Mayor.

The fact that the Service ever happened is itself significant. That in the state of the world in the summer of 1937, Christians from all parts of the world could meet in conference and in worship, in spite of the tension between nations and the disunity of the Churches, was in itself a hope and a promise of unity. For here were Eastern Orthodox representatives from Greece, Rumania, Bulgaria, Poland and from the Russian Exile; Anglicans from all parts of the British Empire and from U.S.A.; representatives of the Protestant Churches in France, Holland, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, as well as from China, Japan, Africa, Australia and U.S.A.; ancient Churches such as the Syrian Church of India, tracing its history back to the Apostles; younger Churches only recently formed on the "mission field"; and all the principal Churches with which we are familiar in Great Britain.

How did it happen? What history lay behind this extraordinary gathering?

To trace the origin of this event one could go back through the whole course of Christian history; indeed, to understand its significance, one would need to do so. But for our purpose it is only necessary to go back about thirty years. In

1910 there was held in Edinburgh the first World Conference which brought together representatives of the missionary societies in Europe, Great Britain and America. The Conference met under the Chairmanship of Dr John R. Mott, one of the great missionary statesmen of our time, and had as Secretary, Dr J. H. Oldham, both of whom were present at the Service in St Paul's. It met under the burden of disunity, seeking a way out of the complication and competition of the missionary situation, seeking ways of co-operation. Out of the Conference there came the International Missionary Council, of which Dr Oldham became the first secretary. The Council, a permanent organ of missionary co-operation on the basis of the maximum common action between separated bodies was no attempt to break down ecclesiastical divisions; it was based on common respect for different beliefs, but equally on the urgent need for clearing away misunderstandings and achieving some degree of common action in the face of the missionary task.

Yet it was inevitable that the question of organic unity should be raised by the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. Why were there so many and such different Churches, when the Bible and the Creeds speak of one Church? In the serious attempt to face this question, the initiative was taken by the Protestant Episcopal Church in U.S.A., under the leadership of Bishop Brent, strengthened by the backing of the late Archbishop Davidson. The result, which came to be known as the "Faith and Order" Movement, was focussed in the project of

a World Conference of representative Churchmen to discuss the Faith of the Church and the Order of the Church, to see how far there was agreement and on what points there was disagreement among Christians from at least the main separated traditions. This Conference met at Lausanne in 1927. There were deep differences, as was to be expected, but there was found to be enough agreement to justify carrying forward the work through a Continuation Committee, charged with certain responsibilities for research into some of the divisive questions that had been raised, and for convening a second conference if and when the time appeared to be ripe. The Edinburgh Conference, 1937, was this second World Conference on Faith and Order.[1]

But there were other questions which also brought Christians together. A deep concern for the peace of the world led to the formation in 1914 of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches. After the Great War Archbishop Söderblom of Sweden, a man whose controlling passion was effective Christian unity, took the lead in the project of a World Conference on social and political questions that finally met in Stockholm in 1925. There were many different streams contributing to the effectiveness of this Conference, among them the Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship in Great Britain, in 1924, and the work of the World Alliance which had gone on during the war and become really influential in the

[1] For an account of this Conference, see *Edinburgh* 1937, by Hugh Martin. (S.C.M., 2s.)

years immediately afterwards. Stockholm revealed many divergences of view, especially in the theological positions from which Christians approached the problem of society, but again sufficient unity was discovered to justify the continuation of the work and the setting up of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, representing the attempt to form a permanent body of research and co-operation between the Churches. This body convened the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State in 1937.

This movement towards unity among the leaders of the Churches could hardly have taken place, and certainly could not have been so successful, if it had not been for the existence of Christian Youth movements such as the World's Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., and the World's Student Christian Federation. A large number of those who became leaders in official inter-church conferences in later life, got to know one another and obtained their initial vision and training in their student days through one or other of these youth movements. It was therefore appropriate that each of the two World Conferences in 1937 associated with its work a group of younger people drawn from the leadership of Christian Youth Movements.

The total sum of these approaches, along very varied lines, towards a common faith and common action among Christian people, and between organised Churches, has come to be known as the "Œcumenical Movement." This is a loose phrase, open to misconception, but it stands for "the expression within history of the given unity of the

Church of Christ." The fact that so difficult a word has been forced upon those who wish to describe this phenomenon is itself important. Some have maintained that either "interdenominational," or "international," or even "interchurch," would be a better term; yet none of these truly expresses the significance of the process it seeks to describe. They all of them start from the fact of division, and describe relations between separated bodies. As such they are true to the empirical facts: for the Churches are separated bodies. Yet, inherent in the being of the Church is the assertion of unity. We none of us profess our belief either in a number of different churches or in one particular denomination: we confess "one holy catholic Church." We therefore need a phrase which will express both the fact that unity is given in faith, even if lost through human sinfulness, and that the Church is universal, both geographically and in essence. The word "œcumenical" stands for this: it expresses the hope of unity, the world-wide nature of the Church, and the fact that unity is given of God.

This then is the history that lies behind the meeting in St Paul's which we have briefly described. Both from the Conferences and from the movement which lies behind them, there is one great absentee: the Church of Rome. Deeply regretted as this is by all those who have to do with this work, the abstention of the Church of Rome from all such gatherings illustrates the two paths that open out before you as soon as the question of Christian Unity is raised. You can

say, with Rome, that the Church is, and always has been, one, and that the things which claim to be Churches are really heretical sects; that dogma is given and is not discussible, and that order has been established once and for all and cannot be questioned. That is a perfectly real answer to the question, and rules out any discussion with other people. Since the Church of Rome holds this position tenaciously, believing that the one true and only Church is that ruled over by the Pope, it cannot send "representatives" to discuss on an equal footing with those they regard as heretical and schismatic. If, on the other hand, you do not take that view, then you must say that the unity of the Church has been lost or obscured by sin, but can be recovered, and that the Church waits to be rediscovered amid the Churches. You are then committed to the difficult path of real "œcumenical" discussion. You have to do two apparently contradictory things: to enter into and question your own tradition, seeking that within it that is really and authentically the Church; and to listen and learn from other traditions, even those most different from and most antipathetic to your own, seeking to learn from them, and if possible to give to them. The first may result in a strong denominational loyalty that makes the second almost unbearable. The second may make you merely an inhabitant of "No-man's Land."

The real test of our desire for unity is whether we can recognise, in a tradition completely different from our own, members of the Body of Christ, and come to love them and desire unity with them.

This may be comparatively simple in the case of people whose ways of thought and worship lie near to ours; but what of those who are totally different? In each of us there is represented, not only a personal point of view, but also a Christian tradition that stands in opposition to and in criticism of other traditions. In conference together we face the question whether, in spite of this, we feel we belong together. Each such encounter, if it issues in Christian fellowship, is such an overcoming of the past and such a deepening of faith to levels that lie beneath apparently irreconcilable differences, that it is nothing less than a gift of God.

The two conferences this summer were concerned with the nature and function of the Church. One of the most important acts of both gatherings was the approval, in principle, of a plan for a World Council of the Churches, which would bring together in one organisation the hitherto distinct movements known as "Faith and Order" and "Life and Work." Into the details of this plan we need not go here, but there is one fundamental question, answered by implication in the suggestion of a World Council, which needs careful thought: Do these two movements belong together?

We can approach the question of unity from two angles, represented by, but not exclusively identified with the two movements we are considering—"Faith and Order" and "Life and Work." We can ask, first, what is the essential faith of the Church, and what are the marks of its true Order? we are then dealing with the Church as a worshipping,

witnessing body, and we are moving on the plane of eternal truths, working from the centre in the hope of reaching the circumference. Or we can begin with the trouble and conflicts of the world and ask how the Church can play its part in them, and what message, derived from its eternal truths, the Church has for a particular historical epoch. In that case we come to the same question—the nature of the Church—from another angle, and with a terrible burden of urgency. The tasks to which the Churches are called then appear so much beyond their strength that in responding to them the Churches may well shatter their own being; and yet that appears to all of us inconceivable when we remember what we owe to these very Churches. It is so hard to distinguish what is eternal and abiding from that which is merely contingent in the Church to which we owe our faith.

One of the important developments in the preparation for the Oxford Conference has been the way in which the discussion of the place and function of the Church in society has been driven back on to fundamental theological questions and thus entered the sphere of "Faith and Order"; while, similarly, in relation to the Edinburgh Conference this summer, the discussion of those issues which once rent Christendom, undertaken in the hope that it may be now possible to heal the divisions of the Church, has been coloured by the state of the world in which the divided Church now finds herself. The two discussions have inevitably drawn closer together.

Thus the central reason why the two move-

ments belong together is that in each of us there is, so to say, "a Faith and Order man" and a "Life and Work man," and that the central problem of Christian living is now clearly seen to be the nature and function of the Church, just as the central problem of human society is seen to be that of community. The two approaches lie so near together that they need each other, just as the two tempers of mind need to criticise and examine one another.

The Oxford Conference was one incident in a process that was set in motion three years ago in an attempt to discover what was the Christian message to the modern world. Under the leadership of Dr J. H. Oldham, as the Chairman of the Research Department of the Universal Christian Council, the preparations for the Conference have developed in three stages: first, the discussion, on as wide an international front as possible, of the central question of the Christian message, out of which came the formulation of nine questions which needed to be answered before the basic question could be tackled; then the discussion of these nine questions; and finally the building of the Conference programme round five of them. The nine questions were: What is the Christian understanding of man, and how is it related to other conceptions of man held in the modern world? What is the relation between the Kingdom of God and history? How is the Christian Faith related to the Common Life? What is the function of the Church in Society? What is the relation of the Church to the Community? How

are Church, Community and State related to the Economic Order? And to Education? What is the relation of the Universal Church (the *Una Sancta*) to the World of Nations, and particularly to the problem of war and peace?

The results of this process are embodied in a series of books, a list of which is given on another page. Two of these books are essential for any real understanding of the Conference itself: *The Church and Its Function in Society*, by J. H. Oldham and W. A. Visser 't Hooft (Allen and Unwin, 8s. 6d.), and *The Churches Survey Their Task* (Allen and Unwin, 5s.). The first is the basic book of the Conference, which was supplied to all delegates. Its main distinctions are assumed in the work of the Conference. The second is the official Report of the proceedings of the Conference itself. This represents what a group of leading laymen and clergy found they could say together concerning some of the major issues of our age, and the points at which they found the most serious divergences of view. The total work of the Conference owes its significance to the fact that the papers contributed to the volumes and the Reports issued by the Conference itself are the result of sustained mutual criticism on a very wide scale, in which theologians and laymen have taken part from a great variety of different nations and traditions.

CHAPTER II

THE NEMESIS OF DISUNITY

ONE great absentee from the Oxford Conference was the Roman Catholic Church. The other was the German Evangelical Church. There had been the fullest possible collaboration with members of the German Church in the preparatory work for the Conference. The Church conflict in Germany had thrown a disconcerting searchlight on the situation of the Church in the contemporary world. The absence of representatives from the Conference was an irreparable loss. A few weeks before the Conference an agreement had been reached between the leaders of the three main sections of the German Evangelical Church to send a common delegation both to Oxford and to Edinburgh: but even so, the difficulties put in their way proved insuperable.

This produced a profound impression, and one of the first acts of the Conference was to set up a small committee to draft a resolution which should convey our greetings to the German Church and express our solidarity with them. This message, as adopted by the Conference, consisted of five short clauses. The first noted the fact that a common German delegation had been possible and deplored their absence. The second

said that we were "greatly moved by the afflictions of many pastors and laymen in the Confessional Church." The third noted that the struggle in which both the Roman and the Protestant Churches were involved was "against distortion and suppression of Christian witness and for the training of the young in a living faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God, and King of Kings and Lord of Lords." The fourth affirmed our solidarity with them: "Your Lord is our Lord, your faith our faith, your baptism our baptism." The last called upon the Churches in all the world to make intercession for them.

The full significance of this message only comes slowly home to the conscience. It ranged the Churches of the world—at least as represented at Oxford—alongside the German Evangelical Church[1]; it recognised that the Roman Catholic Church was engaged in the same struggle; and it referred publicly to the suffering involved. A similar, though shorter resolution was adopted about the Church in Russia, and this was given additional poignancy in that there were representatives of the Russian Church in Exile with us, taking a full and effective part in the Conference.

Here then is a situation in which the Church is threatened by two diametrically opposed régimes; where in spite of the patriotism of German pastors

[1] The representatives of the German Free Churches (Methodist and Baptist) who were present entered a protest against this message on the ground that they enjoyed full freedom under the present régime.

and laymen they find themselves in danger of persecution, and however much Russian Christians may sympathise with the practical aims of the Soviet Government, they get into trouble because they are Christians. How does this throw a searchlight on other situations ?

The first essential is to realise that no such situation is merely the result of the sudden decisions of evil men : it has its roots in the past. The so-called totalitarian states are attempts to meet a real and desperate historical situation.

The second fact we must face is that the Church itself has an ineradicable totalitarian principle within it, and that, therefore, wherever the Church is confronted by another totalitarian claim, there is bound to be conflict.

The third is that totalitarianism, though it may express itself in dictatorship, can and does exist in other forms and even in democratic countries. The enemy for the Christian is not Fascism, Nazism, or Communism *as such*, but the claims of a godless, pagan, or entirely secular society, whatever form it may take. If we look at these points in order, we may see more clearly what the situation is to which the Christian Churches must address themselves.

All the five sections in which the Oxford Conference did its effective work—Church and Community, Church and State, the Economic Order, Education, and the Universal Church and the World of Nations—had to note as one of the characteristics of the present situation, what was called " mass-disintegration " or " social dis-

integration." Until we grasp clearly what is meant by this we cannot understand either the rise of the totalitarian states, or the task of the Church.

Until recently it was possible to speak of the Christian West. There were certain elementary ethical principles which were accepted as norms, even if they were not fully practised. Society gave vague allegiance to Christian standards in national life. But the basis of these principles in Christian faith has been progressively undermined in the past 400 years, until it no longer exists. Since the Renaissance, and in spite of the Reformation, the effective faith of mankind in the West has been steadily moving away from Christianity. To adopt a phrase from a well-known American writer, " the acids of modernity " were dissolving religious faith more and more rapidly. In the nineteenth century the real religion of the western world was the religion of progress, based upon scientific discovery and the autonomy of human reason. Then came the World War, with its stark revelation of the brutality of man and its severance of almost all links with the past. It found the Church divided, bewildered and impotent. A great chasm opened between the faith of the Church and the life of mankind. In those countries which suffered most from the war the tacit assumptions on which pre-war society had been based were swept away : in all countries the accepted moral standards of the past were immeasurably weakened. Some new basis had to be found.

Meanwhile, the West had expanded. The economic and cultural life of Europe and America pressed upon Africa and the East with growing force throughout the later nineteenth century. Its effect was to destroy ancient ways of life, dethrone age-long loyalties, and fill people's minds with a new set of values. The tribal life of Africa suffered most, having least resistance. But the ancient cultures of Japan, China and India were also profoundly disturbed. They might, indeed, have a profound inner contempt for the superficiality of the invading white man; I remember a letter written by a Japanese nobleman to his daughter on her engagement to an American minister in which he said: "How dare you contemplate marriage with one of these inferior Caucasians!" Yet, none the less, "the acids" were at work. A western civilisation already uncertain of itself was unable to repair the damage it wrought among other peoples. Here, too, the war was decisive. It showed the bankruptcy and inherent cruelty of "civilised man."

There was, of course, another aspect to all this. The Church expanded with the West. The missionary enterprise planted the Church, even though in some cases precariously, in all parts of the world, and made it at least possible for Christianity to integrate where secular western standards merely destroyed. The vast increase in the means of communication made the world a unity in a way unimaginable to our forefathers, and made a Universal Church geographically thinkable. But there was a debit account here as well. For it

was not the Church which expanded, but the Churches: and they were the same Churches the inadequacy of which was shown up by the war. A disunited Church, in confusion of thought and practice, could hardly cope with the great, stubborn problems created by the break-up of the ancient unity and loyalties of Africa and the East. A Christendom as distracted as the war showed it to be was perilously near to being forsworn.

Thus, the war proved to be the beginning of the final stage in the pilgrimage that began in the break-up of the Mediæval system. Secularism, on the one hand a revolt against a false dominion of Church over world and on the other an assertion of the self-sufficiency of man, was itself called in question by its terrible fruits in 1914-18. Where, then, was man to look for salvation? How, amid the collapse of standards hitherto accepted, could society be reintegrated so that human life became again a thing of nobility and adventure? In what was there any promise of community?

In answer, men swung away from the Christian faith, with its insistence on sin and its assertion of a transcendent God, and built on other foundations —on nation and race, on class, and on the State. Who can blame them? When secular, non-religious society is on the verge of dissolution and the religion that proclaims that it has the secret of unity is manifestly divided and divisive, we cannot blame men for seeking in blood, race or class a unifying principle, and in the State the effective agent of unity. If Christianity is found

wanting, there is nothing for it but to turn in our tracks and build again the world of the Cæsars. It is a costly process, for it is a world of Cæsars we create and not one Empire: a world that still has within it the seed of conflict and dissolution.

To take, now, the second point: the Church is no stranger to totalitarianism, for it must itself make a total claim upon man. It is not interested merely in how a man behaves, but in what he is. It is not content with a man's leisure, it must claim the whole of a man's life. The Christian Gospel is a word addressed to the whole man and calls him, as a complete personality, with all his interests and responsibilities, into a new relation to God Who is the Lord of his life and of the world. The penalty for holding anything back is still the same as in the days of Ananias and Sapphira—death. The Christian Gospel calls us into responsibility to God, and into responsibility before God to our neighbour. Christianity is in essence a totalitarian religion.

As the bearer of this Gospel, the Church has always been a divisive force in society. The Early Church could not be fitted into the simple scheme of the Roman Empire, where any and every curious cult was permitted, so long as ultimate and final loyalty was reserved for the Emperor. Christians have never been quite able to accept political authority as final: they have had to insist on a double loyalty—to God and to Cæsar—and to refuse to confuse the two. However dormant this dualism may have lain in certain periods of the Church's history, it was always there and always liable to

break out in an opposition that was as inexplicable to the State as the resistance of the Confessional Church now is to the German Government. The Christian religion can never for long be confined to "private opinion."

Hence there is bound to be conflict between the Church and any society that does not recognise the supremacy of God. The Church is bound to demand freedom of belief, of worship, and of conscience, in the name of a God who is truly Lord of history. That freedom may appear highly dangerous to the State, and that authority may be denied. For the grounds of the Church's witness are of faith. In the last analysis the truth of her faith can only be "proved upon her body"; and her last weapon—one that conquered the Roman Empire—is martyrdom.

The issue, however, is not fundamentally that of Church and State, tempting as that simplification is. The real issue is between the Church as a society centred in a reality that transcends all earthly loyalties, and a society which is all-embracing and self-sufficient, for which God does not exist. Christian loyalty is centred in God in Christ: to this test all things, even the demands of family, nation, race and class, are subjected. But modern society has either turned away of set purpose from this God, or has forgotten His Name.

In this sense, there is nothing to choose between a dictatorship and democracy if both are godless. Each must in practice make a total claim upon the interest and activity of man. The very basis of

democracy is destroyed once faith in God decays, and it can become no less a tyranny than dictatorship. If the ruler—whether self-appointed or elected by popular vote, whether one person or a parliament—is responsible to nobody, if there is no criterion of justice other than the transient and varying needs of nation or class, then the nerve of human community is cut. And when we look frankly at the life of our own countries, we can scarcely deny that the real concerns of men's lives are divorced in their minds from the reality of God, and there is therefore a restlessness and hunger that will not long be content with the relics of a tradition long outgrown.

The Church therefore stands as a permanent challenge to mankind. It must raise the question, by its very existence, Do you believe in God? Sooner or later the battle must be joined. It will be joined in practical terms and the Church is at present ill-equipped for the struggle. The modern Cæsars have at their command resources of propaganda, of scientific knowledge, and of armed force quite incommensurate with the past. The power to crush the individual, always considerable, has become irresistible. Only a community, at once faithful, coherent and indomitable can now save the world.

But how? What is the method and what the power of a Christian revolution? How can Christian faith, so poor and weak a thing, and so much the possession of the weak things of this world, make any decisive impact on the organised power of modern society? It may be that the wheel must

come full circle and that, as in the days of the Roman Empire, martyrdom is the only language the world will hear. Or it may be that the scattered forces of Christendom can yet become "the mighty army" we like to sing about. But in that case we must be clearer than we are at present about the relation of the Church to society.

CHAPTER III

ARMY OR RABBLE?

Like a mighty army
Moves the Church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
Where the saints have trod.

So runs the English hymn. A fine sentiment, but is it true? It is glorious to believe that we march forward in unity and discipline to the conquest of the forces of darkness, led by Bishops and Moderators who wield the same Sword of the Spirit, and carry the same Shield of the Faith! The trumpets sound the same clarion call of the Gospel, and the "mighty army" moves as one man! And then the hymn ends, and we sit down and look at one another, and remember, perhaps, that other quite different congregations are singing quite different hymns a mile or so away, and that tomorrow we shall be in the city, dealing in stocks and shares, and doing the humdrum work of the world, just like any other perplexed citizen.

"Only a community at once faithful, coherent and indomitable can now save the world." But do we look like it? Do we really tread where the saints have trod, following them in faith and practice? I remember more than one international Christian youth conference in which the burning

issue was just this : Do we really believe the same Gospel ? Do we believe in the same God ?

Theology has recently assumed a practical importance which many people still find it hard to realise. It used to be assumed that matters of theological dispute could safely be left to those curious people known as " theologians," while the ordinary Christian got on with his job. But now it seems that this very " getting on with the job " is a confused business without some better grasp of the essentials of Christian faith. Moreover, the different, and often conflicting actions of Christians in society are not merely the result of confused and muddled thinking ; they are also the result of different theological positions. It is a good thing therefore to take stock, as briefly as may be, of where we stand in this matter of common faith, and where the main points of disagreement lie. We can only do this very inadequately in a short chapter, but perhaps even a few hints may be useful and serve to show the relation of theology to practice.

Unity in Christ

The hope and the fact of Christian unity lie in allegiance to a common Lord. This is what makes the œcumenical movement both possible and inevitable. The Christian, of whatever tradition, is not a masterless man ; he is a disciple of Jesus Christ. Amid all the divisions and contrary claims of the world, Christians have a common centre, not in any abstract set of principles or propositions,

but in a Person, known through the same record in the New Testament.

But more than that, this common Lord of the Christian is not just someone who lived, but someone who is alive. However we may differ in emphasis and in the understanding of this most astonishing fact, we do not merely believe in "a man who lived two thousand years ago," but in Someone who makes a real claim on our present life. Thus, the Message to the Christian Churches issued by the Oxford Conference can say, and win the consent of members of very diverse traditions in saying it, that "the source of unity is not the consenting movement of men's wills; it is Jesus Christ whose one life flows through the Body and subdues the many wills to His." And it is a simple fact of experience that where "the mind that was in Christ Jesus" takes form in us the barriers raised by history and tradition begin to look less formidable.

The classical statements of Christian faith were attempts to define more closely the consequences of the early affirmation "Jesus is Lord." They were concerned with the Person of Christ. Where Christians meet in honest and sincere discussion that is true to their own experience of God and deepened by common worship, these ancient formulations take on new meaning and become of living influence. There is a strange and compelling reality in the way the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds fall into place in any œcumenical gathering. It is not the imposition of an external standard of faith, as a limit within which discussion must be

confined; it is a rediscovery of the truth which these statements enshrine, which extends the area of agreement still further to cover the main lines of Christian doctrine.

Yet differences do remain. Fellowship is only really strong and Christian when it can sustain the tensions of the struggle for truth. While we rejoice in the reality of the Universal Church, we must look frankly at the divisions that still sunder Church from Church. We can do no more than illustrate these by reference to a question in which some of those differences find their focus.

The Word and the World

How and where do we know God? This is an urgent question as soon as the existence of God is taken at all seriously; for to base your life on a false view of God is not merely to make an intellectual mistake, it is to set your life, so far as it is controlled by faith and thought, against the grain of the universe. We must know who and what God is, and what His purposes are towards us, if we are to have any peace at all. Is God known only in and through the Bible, and especially the New Testament; or is He also known in nature and in the bonds and responsibilities of human communities such as the family and the nation?

This question of revelation lies at the heart of the "German Church Conflict." That is one reason why that conflict sheds so much light on our whole contemporary situation. You have in Germany a great, passionate movement of national

regeneration. We do not yet know what its consequences may be, but for the average German the decision of 1933 against Communism and for National-Socialism marked an historic, final turning-point in national life, and has lifted Germany from the confusion and impotence of defeat to the level of a great and responsible world power once again. What is to be the attitude of Christains to this, and more particularly to the view of life on which it is based? It is on this question that the German Evangelical Church has divided: it is not a political question, it is a theological question centring in the question of Revelation. Is God to be discerned in this movement for national renaissance? Is He known in the life and history of nations in any indubitable and final sense? Or is God authentically known only in and through Jesus Christ? The so-called "German Christians" believe that the national-socialist movement is a manifestation of God of which the Church must take serious account by adapting its Gospel to it. The "Confessional Church" asserts, with all the passionate conviction of martyrdom, that God is known only in and through His Word in Jesus Christ, and that this Word *judges* national life.

Dr Alfred Rosenberg, whose book, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, is the second "Bible" of the Nazi movement, rejects with vehemence the doctrine of sin, on which German Protestantism lays such stress, because he regards it as untrue that the German is a sinner; he is fundamentally noble in character when unpolluted by other

strains and when free to manage his own affairs in his own way. Rosenberg believes in "general revelation" and even in Christ as a particular instance of this. Over against such a view stands the whole of the German Evangelical tradition, insisting that all we know is the particular revelation in Christ, in the light of which alone the uncertain indications of general revelation become meaningful; and that this particular revelation in Christ denies the natural nobility of man, whether German or other. It is a revelation of forgiveness; and that has no meaning for men who are not sinners.

Now this question is alive almost everywhere in the world. There are those in Anglo-Saxon countries who see Jesus as the crown of natural religion; who find God in nature, in art, in human goodness, in the gentle bonds of the family and in the austere demands of the nation. There are many who regard Him as the great Illuminator rather than the Saviour; as an example that can be emulated rather than the Redeemer of a human life that is impotent. Moreover, it is a crucial question for the missionary enterprise of the Church where that task is set in a non-Christian environment. What is the relation of the revelation of God in Christ to the non-Christian religions? There are high qualities in the other great religions, and deep loyalties and long-tried paths in African tribal religion. Is there here a "preparation for the Gospel," a kind of indigenous "Old Testament," which is to be fulfilled in Christ; or is there here only a dim half-light beside which

the light of the Gospel is as blinding as the sun shining suddenly into a darkened room ?

Or take Japan, where Christians stand before the daily choice of Shrine Worship.[1] The Government insists on an act of homage to the Emperor which is said to have purely patriotic meaning, but which is couched in religious forms taken from Shinto worship. Ought Christians to offer this homage ? Does the national community, as such, carry divine meaning so that God can be recognised in it and in its demands ? Is there anything *theologically* wrong in such recognition ? What, in any case, is the relation of Christian faith to human communities presumably created and called into being by the same God that was in Christ ?

Now let us go back to the instance of the German situation. For Christians who take their stand on the ground of general revelation, there is no theological quarrel with Rosenberg. You may dispute that nation and race are ultimate, and may want to take some other human community as more authentic in its claims ; but you are arguing on the same ground. If, on the other hand, you hold that there came into the world in Jesus Christ something that is entirely incommensurate with any human community and with all human values, that there God Himself is finally declared, once and for all, in a living historical person, then here is certain knowledge amid all uncertainties, and here is a truth that is above the

[1] See *Christianity in the Eastern Conflicts*. W. Paton. (Edinburgh House Press, 2s. 6d.)

demands of all earthly loyalties. But then, you are still under obligation to think out what that means for national life and for the claims of human communities.

Further, if you take the first view, then the challenge of Fascism becomes a fundamental *religious* challenge. For it asserts that God is known in nation and race, and there makes an absolute claim on man. If you do not agree, then you have to assert that He is known somewhere else, *e.g.*, in the liberal view of humanity, or in the Marxist interpretation of history. Thus, interpretations of the natural world itself become religious, and political difference becomes religious war. If you take the second view, then the challenge is of a different kind. You then have to protest against making any natural community *absolute* in its demands, because all human life has to be judged by a transcendent standard in Christ. Political judgment, though real and difficult, cannot then be confused with religion. Your choice is not less significant, but it is made as a person responsible, in the last analysis, not to man, but to God.

There is a great deal of difference of view among Christians of equal devotion and sincerity on this question, and this leads to variety of practice and uncertainty of witness within the Christian Churches. Similar differences emerge when we ask, what is the relation of the Church to the world, or when we inquire what is the basis of the Christian ethic. We must note also certain less justifiable causes of difference.

In the first place, the word "Church" is one of the most ambiguous in the English language, and we all of us tend to use it indiscriminately in very different senses. It may mean the Clergy; it may mean the official courts of the Churches; it may mean a particular denomination, or group of denominations; it may mean the sum total of organised Christian bodies in the world, including both Clergy and Laity; it may be used in a vague mystical sense that includes an unknown number of people, some inside and some outside the organised churches. All these uses may be legitimate in their place, but the confusion that arises when we are not clear which meaning we have in mind is very dangerous when we are thinking about the function of the Church in society. When we say, "Surely, the Church should do something," what precisely do we mean by "the Church"? What body of people do we hold responsible for doing what we recommend should be done? The action that is possible and appropriate will vary greatly according as we mean the Bishops, the Clergy, the congregation met for worship, or the ordinary lay citizen. Until we are clear, we constantly differ because we are thinking about different things and calling them by the same name.

Secondly, Christians differ because they are much more influenced by class and nation than they like to think. This economic and national "conditioning" of Christians is the same for them as for other men and women, but it is less presentable as an occasion of disunity, since the

Christian Gospel should set us free from bondage to the conditions in which we were born, and enable us to think more freely and objectively about our world. The small extent to which the Gospel is allowed to have this effect on us is evidenced by the prejudice of all kinds, born of the most questionable parents and leading to any amount of sub-Christian behaviour, that prevents the Church from being what it is meant to be and from doing what it ought to do.

We have then a fundamental unity in our allegiance to Jesus Christ. We are divided on certain grave issues that arise as soon as that basic loyalty is taken seriously. These questions centre in the nature and work of the Church. They are theological questions which affect deeply the behaviour of Christians, and they are peculiarly urgent in the modern world. It is significant of this that the two World Conferences of 1937 were both concerned with the nature of the Church, and that the same question is central to the plans for the International Missionary Council meeting in India in 1938. We have our point of common loyalty in Christ; but we are not agreed on the nature of His Body—and this in a world where the central problem is that of community. In the following three chapters, which summarise and comment on the findings of the Oxford Conference, we shall try to see how far Christian thought has got in facing the challenges of the contemporary world, in spite of these divisions and in the light of this fundamental unity.

CHAPTER IV

QUESTIONS OF BREAD AND BUTTER

SINCE most of our waking hours are spent in the pursuit of the means of livelihood, it matters more than some idealists admit both whether we are successful and how we become successful. The way in which the day is passed does, in fact, affect the kind of people we are.

The Church—in the sense of organised Christianity, charged with a missionary and pastoral task—cannot be indifferent to economic conditions without narrowing its Gospel to the small area of leisure which the average man possesses. For most of us, either we serve God and our neighbour through our daily work, or we have to confess at nightfall that we have not been able to serve Him at all, or at best only incidentally in those personal contacts which are within our control. Incidental love towards our neighbour amid daily work which denies that love is hardly a fitting expression of Christian faith.

The Mediæval Church sought to regulate economic life by insisting on certain ends and by negating others. It was not always successful, but it recognised the obligation. But the centuries since have seen the influence—and the claims—of the Churches narrowed down to the personal

character of employer and employed, until it is a matter of irritation only if the Church ventures to raise its voice on wider issues. Yet clearly, the Church is deeply concerned with any situation "where existing conditions continually undo its work and thwart the will of God for His children."[1]

We all of us get our living through what is known as the Capitalist System. This is "a product of the emancipation of the individual from the social and cultural restrictions of the Middle Ages."[2] It is true that the Reformation — and especially Calvinism — buttressed with religious sanctions the virtues needed in capitalist enterprise,[3] but the inevitable development has been away from any general religious responsibility towards an economic order wherein the final test is gain, and even service to the community a secondary consideration, assumed to follow automatically from the free play of competition.

The ill-effects of a system based on free competition and inspired by desire for wealth have compelled the State in liberal countries to attempt mitigation of the evil through social legislation—factory laws and social insurance, etc. In the dictator countries an attempt has been made to control private enterprise—or at least to direct it to the service of the community. The socialist element in National Socialism and Italian Fascism has never quite disappeared from the hopes of at

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 238. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[3] See Tawney: *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism.*

least some supporters of the régimes, even though in practice it may have had little fundamental influence. State control in itself may, however, have very unfortunate results in that the group of people it has sought to control may themselves have such a large political influence as to control legislation in their own interests.

While the intervention of the State in economic affairs is a tacit admission that all is not right with the economic order when left to itself, a much stronger and more radical criticism is offered by Socialism and Communism. This is a protest on the part of those who suffer most from the system as it is, whose lives are restricted and whose liberties are curtailed by the mere fact that they have nothing to sell but their labour and there is not always a market for that. The average worker feels that he has had a "raw deal," and is the victim of the uncontrolled cupidity of the owning class. Socialism and Communism, in varying degrees, offer him an explanation of this which appears to fit in with the facts as he experiences them, and which lays bare to him the logic of a situation in which there is a deep conflict of interests between employer and employed. To greater or less extent both movements accept the Class Struggle as a fact, whether or not it need issue in actual violence.

We shall return to the relation of the Christian Church to Communism later. Here we must ask what challenges to Christian faith and action arise out of the economic order as it is.

Four Challenges to Christian Faith

The section of the Oxford Conference which dealt with the Economic Order included laymen and clergy, business men and workers, economists and philosophers. They were very mixed in political affiliation, some being Conservatives and others Socialists and Liberals. The significance of their discussions lies in great measure in the fact that when they came to examine what was really happening to men and women, whether they were employers or employed, under the present order; when they managed to get beneath the phrases and catchwords which provoke strong emotional reactions, they came to quite astonishing agreement both on the points at which the Christian faith is challenged, and in the approach to a solution of some of the problems with which they were confronted. While most of the work of the section was done by a small drafting committee, it was remarkable that even those who had to leave before the last meeting of the section—apart from one or two who had to leave much earlier, before the report in its final form was in shape — left their votes to be recorded in favour of the draft report which embodied their findings.

The Christian view of life is fundamentally challenged at four points in the present economic order.

1. *Acquisitiveness.*—The present economic order tends to "enhance acquisitiveness" in all those

engaged in it. That is, since personal freedom depends on money, this becomes a standard of success in life and the aim of all labour. Whether you are a day labourer, whose home depends on a precarious few shillings a week, or the managing director of a great business house, security and the freedom to do other things besides those required in the actual earning of your living depend on money. Hence, the pressure of the whole order is towards the desire for gain.

2. *Inequalities.*—In spite of social legislation, and when everything has been said in mitigation of the facts, there remain inequalities of opportunity that are indefensible on any Christian standard. Education, leisure and health are so unequally distributed, and so dependent on income, that the mere fact of birth may hopelessly handicap a man who otherwise might be of the greatest service to the community. This inequality of opportunity results in a class division of society which is a barrier to human fellowship.

3. *Irresponsible Power.* — Centres of economic power have been formed which are not responsible to anybody but themselves and in practice constitute something of a tyranny over the lives of masses of men and women. The power in the hands of men who have no social check on their actions, and only the check of risk and profit, is literally the power of life and death, which in other respects is vested in the State alone.

4. *Denial of Christian Vocation.*—The only forms of employment open to many men and women, or the fact that none is open at all, prevent them

from finding a sense of Christian vocation in their daily life.

Clearly a religion of redemptive love must be at war with acquisitiveness; it must be vitally concerned to remedy a situation in which inequalities restrict freedom and fellowship, for the essence of Christian love is responsibility before God to and for one's neighbour. Moreover, a society in which Christian vocation becomes meaningless is necessarily condemned by Christian standards. But how alter it?

Apart from the general questions of theological difference discussed in another chapter, "the profoundest difference at the present time in many countries seems to be between those who believe that the challenges to the Christian faith outlined (above) can be met within the framework of a system of private enterprise, and those who demand the supplanting of that system by one primarily based upon the social ownership of the means of production."[1]

That is, there are Christians who believe that within the present order Christianity can so modify acquisitiveness as to render it harmless or even transform it into its opposite; so supplement inequality by service as to make it no hindrance but rather an opportunity for the life of the Spirit; so emphasise man's responsibility before God and his fellow men that economic power can be held without spiritual danger; and so enlarge man's understanding that vocation can be found and held within the system as it is. There are others,

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 110.

on the other hand, who believe that only the abolition of purely private ownership of industrial goods can give the spirit of man that freedom which is required by Christian faith; that Christianity demands the expression of community in terms of goods, and that that is impossible under Capitalism.

Should the Church take Sides?

As the social crisis in which we stand deepens, this division between Christians may well become acute. As with the question of participation in war, it may so divide as to render impotent the Christian forces. Ought the Church to take sides? Ought the fellowship of the Church to break on this question of "Christianity—Right or Left"? "The Christian Church is a fellowship in Christ which transcends differences of judgment and divergences in action in relation to the concrete economic situation. Further, if Christians are brought to repentance in the light of the Christian message, they can never maintain that attitude of fanatical hatred towards members of other groups which is now so common in the world. They and their opponents are both sinners in the presence of God, and the recognition of this fact, in social as well as in personal terms, would itself be a great constructive contribution towards moderating the bitterness of the struggle between social groups."[1] Whether the Church really is, or may become, such a fellowship will determine the fate of the Church and the fate of Christians. In any revolutionary

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 114.

situation where the opposing groups believe no compromise to be possible, people who refuse to take sides receive small thanks from either party. Nor does the attitude suggested in the quotation involve abstention from political activity on the part of Christians: it rather asserts that the Church as a worshipping community of sinful, fallible men ought to hold in one fellowship of contrition even the bitterest political opponents, and that if it really did, then it would be a powerful factor in affecting the course and methods of the social struggle. The extent of the Church's failure in this most difficult task is only too apparent from the political and social prejudices active within the Churches.

For the Church itself is involved in the situation it must criticise. Where the protest against social injustice has "allied itself with a radical denial of Christianity, the Church, and belief in God, this is partly due to the fact that the Churches had become so deeply involved in the social and cultural attitudes of the wealthier members of society, upon whom they were frequently dependent, politically and economically."[1] No honest self-criticism can avoid the conviction that much of the Marxist charge against Christianity, while it may be untrue of Christianity as it should be, is uncomfortably true of the Churches as they are and of ourselves as Christians. It is all too easy to regard an attack on the Churches and on ourselves as Christians as an attack directed against God. The temptation of the ancient Jews was to regard the antagonistic

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 102.

nations round about them as merely enemies, not only of themselves, but of God. The Prophets strove to teach them otherwise; to make them see that these oppressors were also under the hand of God and part of the judgment of God on Jewish exclusiveness and pride. So we as Christians are constantly tempted to regard Communism as the product of man's evil nature, whereas it may better be seen as a consequence of the failure and blindness of the Church. We can well be reminded of our slackness in matters of social justice, even if it be by the violent antagonism of a political party that is bent on the destruction of our faith. At the same time there are three elements at least in Communism which are irreconcilable with Christian truth.[1] They are, first, *utopianism*—the expectation that change in society will necessarily spell improvement in human personality, and the limitation of human hope to this world; second, *materialism*, which makes economic needs and conditions the sole source of moral values; and third, *the disregard for the dignity of the individual* which subordinates him ruthlessly to the welfare of the class.

The Social Teaching of the Church

The Church can be variously regarded; but preeminently it is a fellowship of men and women at work in the world, whose actions are dominated by a new outlook because they have come to know the forgiveness of God. The only world there is for them to work in is the present one; and thus they share in all the imperfections of a society that is

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 103.

very far from reflecting the Kingdom of God. As such they are inevitably involved in economic and political decisions and must make these in the light of their Christian faith. For the laymen of the Church—who form the vast majority of Church members—social issues are day to day inescapable choices; they cannot, even if they would, avoid them.

The Church therefore has a teaching function in regard to society. This is not, in the first instance, to lecture the non-Christian world from the pulpit, but to help ordinary men and women in the very difficult questions of daily life.

What are the main lines along which such Christian teaching about the economic order should travel? The Report of the Oxford Conference suggests the following five ends and standards "as applicable to the testing of any economic situation":

(1) Any economic arrangement which frustrates or restricts right fellowship between man and man must be modified.

(2) Every child or youth, regardless of race or class, must have opportunities of education suitable for the full development of his particular capacities.

(3) Disablement in the course of work should not mean penalisation economically.

(4) Labour has an intrinsic worth and dignity, as being designed by God for man's welfare.

(5) The resources of the earth should be recognised as gifts of God to the whole human race.

The Question of Property

Underlying this whole discussion is the question of property, and the Christian mind on this fundamental issue is apt to be either confused, or merely a reflection of the attitude of society as a whole. The confusion is often a jumble of harsh sayings of Jesus concerning the danger of riches, a vague and often sentimental belief in the stewardship of possessions, and the empirical fact that private property is inescapable in some form or another and that human freedom depends on financial resources. Thus the average Christian who is at all sensitive to the facts of inequality tends to have a very troubled conscience, without knowing quite why. There is still a great deal of work to be done on the question, but the following four statements were agreed to by the section on the Economic Order at the Oxford Conference :

(1) All human property rights are relative and contingent only, in virtue of the dependence of man upon God as the giver of all wealth and as the creator of man's capacities to develop the resources of nature. This fundamental Christian conviction must express itself both in the idea of stewardship or trusteeship, and in the willingness of the Christian to examine accumulations of property in the light of their social consequences.

(2) The existing system of property rights and the existing distribution of property must be criticised in the light of the largely non-moral processes by which they have been developed, and criticism must take account of the fact that every

argument in defence of property rights which is valid for Christian thinking is also an argument for the widest possible distribution of these rights.

(3) Individual property rights must never be maintained or exercised without regard to their social consequences, or without regard to the contribution which the community makes in the production of all wealth.

(4) It is very important to make clear distinction between various forms of property. The property which consists in personal possessions for use, such as the home, has behind it a clearer moral justification than property in the means of production and in land which gives the owners power over other persons. All property which represents social power stands in special need of moral scrutiny, since power to determine the lives of others is the crucial point in any scheme of justice. . . .

"The implication of any one of these standards, seriously taken, will involve drastic changes in economic life." [1] But the difficulty lies in awakening the imagination and conscience so that our apathy may be overcome. This should form another aspect of the teaching function of the Church—"The message of Christianity should throw a searchlight on the actual facts of the existing situation and in particular on the human consequences of present forms of economic behaviour. This searchlight of the Christian message can also make clear the obstacles to economic justice in the human heart, and especially those that are present in the hearts of people within the Christian Church." [2]

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, pp. 116, 117. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 119, 121.

We are familiar with the heart-searching quality of the Christian message in relation to personal living, the awakening of a sense of sin and unworthiness that is necessary before forgiveness has any meaning : but this ruthless self-knowledge should extend to the results of our sin in the life of society and in the lives of our fellow-men. The sting of real repentance is required if we are to take any action in social affairs.

What can we do?

When we come to action, a distinction must be drawn between the responsibilities of the Churches as organised societies, and those of individual Christians in the pursuit of ordinary avocations. The Churches as such have three immediate tasks :

(1) The Churches are property holders and employers. Their first responsibility lies, therefore, in the right administration of their own funds. The world will hardly heed the admonitions of a Church which is itself insensitive to its own shortcomings ; nor will Christians easily be trained for new and costly action except within a Church whose own financial transactions are governed by other principles than those of the world, and which are yet not merely sentimental and slipshod in handling public funds.

(2) Too often pronouncements are made by Christian bodies on the basis of inadequate knowledge and by people who have no real responsibility for implementing their own resolutions. The Churches can see to it that both together and

individually they have the best means of ascertaining the facts, of knowing what is happening in the society in which their members work.

(3) As societies organised for worship much more needs to be done by the Churches to integrate work and worship, to bring daily life and activity to the test of offering it to God, not in general terms but concretely, in terms of what the worshippers do day by day.

The ordinary Christian has similarly three responsibilities. He can seek to order his own life, in business, industry and the professions, and his own expenditure, so as to bring that life more fully under the domination of God's Kingdom. He can join with a group of friends in undertaking experiments in new ways of life and thought. He can take his political responsibilities seriously in an effort to relate political affiliation to the need of transforming the existing economic order.[1]

The words "economic order" may easily mask the reality we talk about, for they are impersonal and abstract. Beneath them lies the simple human need of food, clothing and shelter as the basis for life. This is every man's daily concern. To secure them in such a way that God is served thereby and our neighbours do not suffer, is the economic task before the Church and an inescapable demand on all Christians. "The world has become a neighbourhood and for that high destiny mankind is not yet fit." It is the task of the Church to fit mankind for its destiny.

[1] All these points are discussed at greater length in *The Churches Survey Their Task*, pp. 125-29.

CHAPTER V

MEN OF A DOUBLE LOYALTY

If questions of bread and butter are the most immediate and pressing for most men and raise most concretely questions of Christian duty, the conflicting claims of Nation, State and Church form a burning issue for countless Christians. Whether we look at the so-called dictator countries, or at the inevitable demands of the State in democratic countries, as illustrated in time of war, the battle is fairly set.[1] The Church has everywhere to answer the question: What is its relation to the national community in which it is set, and what is its view of organised political authority? It is easy in this matter to answer the question for other people, to say, if you are British, what Christians in Germany, or Russia, or Japan should do; it is much more difficult to face the issue as it meets you in your own country and discern where Christian responsibility lies. We are so used to the demands made by our own nation that we tend to accept them uncritically. Or we see the challenge in one instance—perhaps in the claim of the State for military service—while being blind

[1] For an illuminating description of the world-wide nature of the problem see W. Paton, *Christianity in the Eastern Conflicts*. (Edinburgh House Press, 2s. 6d.)

to it in other cases, as, *e.g.* in the payment of Income Tax, most of which goes on armaments.

The Church is by nature universal. "I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church." Christian thought begins therefore with the fact of unity discovered in the mercy and forgiveness of God, and expressed in the Lordship of Christ over His Church. But the Church functions in nations that are separate and divided, whose life is ordered and controlled by autonomous Sovereign States. Moreover, it is composed of men and women whose minds have been formed by the pressure of a particular national community, and they would not be the same people out of that setting. The Christian therefore is set an almost impossible task: he must live as a member of a universal community in loyalty to a God who transcends all our differences, within a particular community which has its own norms and standards and makes its own claims.

Moreover, it is becoming very clear that the Church forms a minority in each nation. That is clearly true of the Churches of Asia and Africa where the vast majority belong to other faiths. The situation in the West is masked by the continuance, in certain countries at least, of some attenuated form of the *Corpus Christianum*, and by the fact that some countries so confuse Church and Nation that no distinction is possible. But taking the world as a whole, even the professing Christians form a minority, and those for whom faith is a living reality form a still smaller group. "For the relation of the Church to the Community the

mission field is now normative. The relation of the Church in China to Chinese Life is more typical than the relation of the Church in Britain to British Life: indeed, the reality in Britain may be more like that in China than is commonly suspected." [1]

If this is true, it has far-reaching consequences. It must affect not only our own view of our task in the West, but also the way we regard Churches in predominantly non-Christian countries. The Churches in Asia and Africa are not only Churches that need our help, but Churches from which we can humbly learn, since they illustrate the relation of a Church to a non-Christian environment more clearly than Churches in the so-called Christian lands. The conscious revolt of countries in the West against Christianity may do more than we realise [2] for the effective unity of the Churches, by placing us all in much the same missionary situation. A minority movement must dispense with the luxury of division. Yet it must be admitted that most of us in the West have yet to awaken fully to this new situation. We still live on the presupposition of a *Corpus Christianum*, that is, we still believe, subconsciously, that the life of society is directed to Christian ends, and all our normal Church life is based on the presuppositions of an era that has already closed in many countries and is fast closing in others.

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 200.

[2] Hence the close connection between the World Conferences in Oxford and Edinburgh and that projected by the International Missionary Council in India, 1938.

The Nation and Nationalism

To define nationality is not easy since so many factors enter into the reality behind the word. Moreover, words mean different things to different peoples and the German word *Volk* is quite untranslatable into English. For an excellent discussion of this in short compass we must refer readers to the Report on Church and Community in *The Churches Survey Their Task* (pp. 223 ff.).

For all of us nationality is so strong a force as to be almost undefined and uncriticised: it is strongest of all in those who are least conscious of it. The recrudescence of violent forms of Nationalism, so marked a feature of the modern world, is no new phenomenon. Nor is the perplexity in which Christians find themselves in relation to the demands of the Nation. What is new—at least in Christian history—is the deliberate repudiation of Christian faith by nationalists. Hitherto, although the supremacy of national loyalty has gone almost unquestioned, even the most ardent nationalist has given his patriotism the sanction of Christianity. Baldur von Schirach's now famous slogan, "He who serves Adolf Hitler serves Germany, and he who serves Germany serves God," would not have been very noteworthy, would indeed have been calmly accepted a generation ago by most professing Christians. It is not very different from the British slogan, "My country, right or wrong," nor is the attitude implied in it very far removed from the average British citizen's attitude to the

Crown. What *is* different is the conscious rejection of Christianity that underlies and gives new meaning to the terms. It is a fact of immense significance for the Christian Church that the two movements which seek to stem the tide of social disintegration by asserting a powerful and overriding loyalty—Fascism in nation and race, and Communism in class—are both of them, either wholly or in large measure, not only a-Christian, but anti-Christian. Nor is this surprising when we realise that most Christians have not thought much about the place of the nation in the Divine purpose, and many of us have confused Christian universalism with an abstract international idealism that has in fact no Christian basis, and merely neglects the power of national loyalty. The result has been either that the Church has merely given religious sanction to national patriotism (which is now strong enough to do without it), or it has disregarded some of the strongest passions in mankind. On the other hand the Communist regards the Church as the ally of the possessing class, and sees in the easy acceptance of national distinctions as final a culpable neglect of the more fundamental factor of class. The Church is thus caught between two fires.

The State

The State is the organised political expression of the nation. There are very different views of its nature and functions, ranging from the Marxist view that it is the instrument of power forged and

utilised by the possessing classes to further their own ends and which must be captured by the proletariat and turned against their former masters, to the liberal view that it is the organ through which the voice of the people is made operative under democracy. In any case, one of the signs of the times is a vast increase in the functions and competence of the State in all spheres of life. We do not need to refer to the so-called totalitarian countries to illustrate this. We have only to reflect on the development of political authority in the democratic lands. In Industry, Commerce, Education, Public Health, Social Services of all kinds state enterprise or state interference has grown out of all knowledge since the opening of the twentieth century. Moreover, the power, potential or actual, of the State over its citizens has vastly increased. The means of mass-suggestion by radio, cinema and advertising, and the force of arms at the disposal of a central political authority is now immeasurably greater than before the Great War; moreover, it is now possible, by rigid censorship, to prevent people knowing what is happening altogether.

The Christian View

What, then, is the Christian view of Nation and State?

"The Christian sees distinctions of race as part of God's purpose to enrich mankind with a diversity of gifts. Against racial pride or race antagonism the Church must set its face implacably

as rebellion against God. Especially in its own life and worship, there can be no place for barriers because of race or colour. Similarly the Christian accepts national communities as part of God's purpose to enrich and diversify human life. Every man is called of God to serve his fellows in the community to which he belongs. But national egotism tending to the suppression of other nationalities or of minorities is, no less than individual egotism, a sin against the creator of all peoples and races. The deification of nation, race, or class, or of political or cultural ideals, is idolatry, and can only lead to increasing division and disaster." [1]

"There is no room for any differentiation between races as to their intrinsic value. All share alike in the concern of God, being created by Him to bring their unique and distinctive contributions to His service in the world. Here again, however, the gift can be, and is, abused. The sin of man asserts itself in racial pride, racial hatreds and persecutions, and in the exploitation of other races. Against this in all its forms the Church is called by God to set its face implacably and to utter its word unequivocally, both within and without its own borders." [2]

Nationality, then, in the Christian view, is a creation of God for the enrichment of human life, and, as all such gifts, must be accepted humbly and gladly and used in the service of His Kingdom. Any attempt to exalt the nation to a place where its interests and demands are final is a denial of

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 58. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

God; is sin. The State is an instrument of justice, and as such must serve, not its own ends, but the purposes of God. And for the Christian, God is known in Jesus Christ.

"We recognise the existing states as historically given realities, each of which in the political sphere is the highest authority, but which, as it stands itself under the authority and judgment of God, is bound by His will and has the God-given aim of upholding law and order, of ministering to the life of the people united within it or of the peoples or groups who are so united, and also of making its contribution to the common life of all peoples.

"At the same time we recognise that the State as a specific form and the dominating expression of man's life in the world of sin, by its very power and its monopoly of the means of coercion, often becomes an instrument of evil. Since we believe in the holy God as the source of justice, we do not consider the State as the ultimate source of law but rather as its guarantor. It is not the lord, but the servant of justice. There can be for the Christian no ultimate authority but very God." [1]

It is perhaps worth pointing out again that the crucial issue in this whole discussion is that of revelation. Most people would agree that God is the ultimate ground of justice, but how is His will known? Is it declared in the nation or the race, or in certain rational principles of democracy, or is God finally declared in Jesus Christ? Do we bring justice to the test of the needs and wishes of a human community, or to the test of the

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 78.

revelation of God in Christ? Is there any other reliable source of knowledge concerning God than that given in the New Testament? This is the dividing line, not only between Christians and non-Christians, but also among Christians themselves.

The Tension in the Christian Citizen

There are distinctive functions of Church and State that need to be held in mind. The Church's concern is with faith in God, that is, with eternal realities. The State is concerned with justice, order and security in a world of sin and change. "The distinctive character of the Church's activity is the free operation of grace and love. The distinctive character of the State's activity, whatever its constructive function in the cultural and social life may be, is the power of constraint, legal and physical."[1]

The tension between these two bodies appears not only in the regions where authority overlaps, as *e.g.* in education, but most poignantly in the life of the Christian citizen, and especially the statesman, who is both a member of the Church (and therefore committed to "the free operation of grace and love") and a responsible member or agent of the State (and therefore committed to coercion). Here appears again that characteristic of Christianity which made it impossible to reconcile with the Roman Empire—the dual loyalty to God and Cæsar. The Christian can neither contract

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 81.

out of the world, nor can he whole-heartedly serve the world as it is. He has at once to serve and criticise, to restrain the passions of men so that society does not fall into disorder, and to follow the way of redemption. Thus, Christianity is necessarily an irritant in the body politic: when it is truly lived it must create tensions, and not least in the lives of its adherents. It can demand freedom for itself only in the name of God: and if the State chooses to deny the relevance of that authority, then it may well persecute the Church. The existence of the Church, where it is truly *Church*, is an abiding challenge to the State and to the Nation, whether they believe in God or no.

The relation of Church to Nation and State has taken an urgent meaning of recent years because it has become a matter of life and death in certain countries. In Russia, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Mexico, Japan and Manchukuo, the Christian dilemma is clearly illustrated. In India the loyalties of Indian Christians to a nation that is struggling for freedom and to a Church which owes its birth to British and other western missionaries are matters of poignancy. The history of the past hundred years has posed in clear terms an age-old issue before this generation.

There is no short-cut in Christian discipleship. We are set in a world where there is only one condition on which discipleship is easy—and that is that we are willing to restrict the sphere of operation of our faith to private opinion and personal fellowship. If we do that, then the State and the Nation can have no quarrel with us,

though we may be regarded as peculiar. But if our faith is in a God who is Lord of the nations as well as of our individual souls; if we profess faith in a God who claims the whole of life, including the life of the Nation and the administration of justice in the State, then we will find Christian living almost intolerable. It is not so much the fear of external conflict with authority; though that may come. It is much more, for sensitive spirits, the internal tension between the earthly bonds of national community and the demands of a God who transcends those bonds; the terrible realism of the words of Jesus: "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother . . . yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Yet in that very tension lies the hope of human freedom and of national well-being. All else, after a time, is stagnation and death.[1]

Of course, there are great areas over which co-operation with the State in the interests of the Nation presents no such problem for the Christian. In that we can but rejoice, and play our part. But always there must be for us this double loyalty in which there is at least the possibility of conflict until the "Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ."

[1] Hence, the claim the Church must make to fulfil her task in witnessing to the Lordship of Christ over all spheres of life, her claim for freedom to build up a community whose primary loyalty is to Christ, is necessarily a claim for the freedom of all men, maintained even against the State if need be.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHURCHES AMID INTERNATIONAL DISORDER

In international affairs disorder is the fact and order is a hope. Any society that consisted of individuals each of whom claimed the right to determine what was right, and to be, in the last resort, judge and executioner in his own cause, would be essentially disorderly and peace would depend on chance coincidence of personal interest. Such is, essentially, the world of nations to-day: a society of sovereign states each claiming the right to adjudicate its own cause and to enforce its judgment, if need be, with the sword. That is not new. What is new is, first of all, the methods of warfare masked by that euphemistic and romantic word "sword"; and then the fact that this realisation comes after nearly twenty years of hope in the possibility of a true international order of which the League of Nations seemed a promise. The failure of that hope, first experienced in the defeated powers, and especially in Germany, where the League has always seemed but the old Allies writ large, and then in the democratic states who based most hope on the League, has led to a corresponding reaction. No one who has heard a German crowd laugh at the bare mention of the League can forget the note of utter

cynical disillusion that this laughter contains, while at the other extreme the deep perplexity of the peace movement testifies to the weight of hope that was built on the foundation of Geneva. We have now three great groups of World Powers: those whose interest lies in the preservation of the Peace Treaties; those whose energy is wholly directed to revision; and those who are more or less neutral in the matter. These correspond generally to the former division of "Allied and Associated Powers," Germany and her former allies, and the countries that were neutral in the war. But the picture is now complicated and the position made infinitely more dangerous, by the splitting of Europe into "ideological camps." The opposition of Bolshevism and Fascism appears to be absolute, and it has swung the centre of interest into the eastern parts of Europe, so that you now have Russia caught between Japan and Germany; Germany between Russia and France; France between Italy and Germany; and Great Britain still—as before the Great War—a doubtful factor in the situation. In the last ten years the world has moved from uneasy but dependable peace to the edge of the volcano; the Far East is already at war and Spain the scene of international and "ideological" conflict.

The Responsibility of the Church

What responsibility has the Church for international order? How can that responsibility be fulfilled?

"In such a world the duty of the Church is to call all men to repentance, to faith, and to a compassionate concern with the multitudes who suffer. We need not despair; the world belongs to God; to believe in His power and love is not to escape from reality but to stand upon the rock of the only certainty that is offered to men." [1]

The Church has its own ground of hope, which is stronger than the grounds of the world's despair. An essential part of that hope is its own nature, all too often forgotten or left unrealised by Christian people themselves, as an œcumenical society. The word needs some explanation, but no apology. "The word international necessarily accepts the division of mankind into separate nations as a natural if not a final state of affairs. The term œcumenical refers to the expression within history of the given unity of the Church. The one starts from the fact of division and the other from the fact of unity in Christ." [2] That is to say, the essence of the Church is a unity not achieved by man but given in the experience of salvation. "If a man be in Christ there is a new creation," in which "there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free." And it is this datum of faith from which all Christian thought and action must proceed.

This œcumenical unity has been given geographical reality by the missionary activity of the past hundred years. As we noted in an earlier chapter, this not only planted the Church in all lands, but also reproduced Christian divisions

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 167. [2] *Ibid.* p. 168.

there. There is a heavy debit account. The Oxford and Edinburgh Conferences are, however, most encouraging signs of sustained effort on the part of the Churches to overcome their divisions and realise in greater measure what is given in their very innermost nature—unity in Christ.

We have also noted that this universal character of the Church must express itself in localised forms —within the nations—and that this creates a tension within Christian life itself. We have seen that "the State, whether it admits it or not, is not autonomous, but is under the ultimate governance of God." Without such a view international order is impossible. A world of entirely autonomous states can only achieve a relative stability. The Church holds a view of the State as subordinate to the judgment of God, which at least makes order thinkable, while her very being asserts the *fact* of human unity recoverable in Christ. Therefore, *the Church holds a position of crucial importance in the struggle for international peace, and the immediate battleground is not Geneva, or some other country than our own, but the nation and state in which we are set, and perhaps, even prior to that, the Church we serve.*

National Sovereignty and the League of Nations

The heart of the difficulty in establishing international order lies in the absolute claim each State makes to sovereignty. If the Church really

believes in its own nature and in the subordination of the State to the ends of justice, then at least she must urge on the nations the duty of abandoning the claim to be judge in their own cause, which all nation-states now assert. The Church can only do this effectively in relation to the individual states themselves in which she exists and works. Only if we are prepared to oppose absolute sovereignty in our own country, have we the right to commend such abrogation to other states.

The danger of imagining that the focus of action in international affairs is a vague international community and not the behaviour of your own nation is illustrated in the general attitude to the League of Nations, especially in those countries where popular support for the League has been particularly strong. "Why does not the League do something about it?" But "the League is not a government. . . . Those who criticise the League are really criticising the governments of the member states, or certain particular governments. . . . The League is not a Church. Its concern is with day-to-day politics and administration. . . . The League is a means to certain ends."[1] Those ends are publicly expressed in the pledges given by governments in terms of a great ideal of peace and peaceful co-operation. If certain powerful governments have become so deeply convinced of the hypocrisy of those pledges that they now regard the League as a mere cloak for a certain form of alliance, then the fault does not lie wholly

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, pp. 175-77.

on one side. It is clear that the establishment of international order demands a change of heart, for which the deep, unconscious selfishness of national communities is not yet ready. The primary task of the Church lies at that point.

In so far as the Church realises her own nature as an œcumenical society, she serves the cause of order, by helping to create that outlook which believes human unity to be possible and refuses to acquiesce in perpetual division. In so far as she is faithful to her evangelistic task in *all* nations, she creates the conditions in the human heart necessary if pledges, treaties, international law are to be in any sense binding. But it cannot be too strongly urged that the conditions in international affairs are fundamentally different from those within the nation-state. Within the State there is a unity of law and force: it may be imperfect and it may be subject to aberration, but in all civilised states "two processes are inextricably blended in practice: the observance and enforcement of the law and the constant and steady development of law to conform to changing social needs." In the international sphere "law and force have never yet been brought into an effective working partnership."[1]

This point is of fundamental importance for any discussion of international order. "Law," in international affairs, consists of a series of agreements and treaties entered into by Sovereign States. It differs from law within any one State in that it is incomplete, it is not backed by the

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 172.

conscience of ordinary citizens, and it has no central force behind it. Most of the treaties express agreement on the basis of power; they were made at the conclusion of wars, and stabilise the relative position of victors and vanquished at that time. There exists as yet no effective means of changing international arrangements except through the use of force, or the threat of force; for no system of arbitration has been evolved which commands the confidence of nation-states. As long as governments believe that in the last resort they can only get what they want by violence, they are not likely to abandon war as a final method of change. It makes no essential difference whether "what they want" is the preservation of their own "interests" and of the territory or influence they already possess, or expansion of territory or of interests beyond their present position of power. Neither the "Haves" nor the "Have-nots" really believe in any other form of security than that of arms, and that in spite of general pacts such as the Briand-Kellogg renunciation of war.

Thus, international order is in a very elementary stage of development. It is dominated still by "power politics"; there is no means devised of peaceful change; there is no central authority armed with the force necessary to compel obedience to law. Add the quite conscious rejection, on the part of certain very important countries, of the whole system of ideas on which the League of Nations was founded, and the very imperfect acceptance of these ideas by others, and we see

that we are as yet much farther away from the conditions in which lasting peace is possible than we like to realise.

The Church and War

That means that there is still a very great likelihood of international war: in fact, as things stand at present, war is almost more likely than peace, and must be as long as international disorder continues. It is here that for all sensitive Christian minds the real perplexity lies. In the event of war, what is the duty of the Church and of individual Christians? Is it then right—or at least not utterly wrong—to take up arms at the call of one's own nation?

On this question Christians of equal sincerity are divided. To admit that fully and frankly is the first necessity. The second is to accept the fact that fundamental disagreement is not necessarily the result of perversity on the part of those who do not agree with us. The discussion of this issue will get nowhere until we learn to *listen* to one another and try to understand. Into the discussion we cannot enter here at length: there are books enough on one side or the other already. The more important thing is to see how far we can go together before our ways must divide, and it is for this reason that the Report of the Oxford Conference on this point is so important. In the group which worked on the "Church and War" both pacifist and non-pacifist opinion were represented, and both theologians and practical politicians: it included Sir Alfred Zimmern, Lord Cecil, the Archbishop of York, Professor Charles

Raven, Dr Richard Roberts, M. Pierre Maury, Mr John Foster Dulles, Dr John Mackay, Archbishop Germanos and Dr T. T. Lew. It is therefore of great significance that such a group of responsible Christians should have been able to go as far as they did in agreement.

"Wars, the occasions of war, and all situations which conceal the fact of conflict under the guise of outward peace, are marks of a world to which the Church is charged to proclaim the Gospel of redemption. War involves compulsory enmity, diabolical outrage against human personality, and a wanton distortion of the truth. War is a particular demonstration of the power of sin in the world, and a defiance of the righteousness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. No justification of war must be allowed to conceal or minimise this fact.

"In all situations the Christian has to bear in mind both the absolute command, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' and the obligation to do what most nearly corresponds to that command in the circumstances confronting him.

"We have to recognise two widely divergent views regarding war—along with several that are intermediate. One view hopes for the elimination of war by the power of God working in history through the religious and moral enlightenment of men and the exercise of their free wills; the other view regards man as so bound in the necessities of a sinful world that war will be eliminated only as a consequence of the return of Christ in glory."

The Report then goes on to designate the three main positions this divergence produces :

(1) That the Church must renounce war altogether and will never become "a creative, regenerative, and reconciling instrument" until it does.

(2) That Christians can only take part in just wars, defined either on the basis of international law, or as vindicating some essential Christian principle (*e.g.* defence of the weak).

(3) That the Christian's obligation to obey the State in its divinely appointed task of preserving the nation from anarchy, means that normally he must take up arms and can only refuse when he is sure his country is fighting for a wrong cause.[1]

It is to be emphasised that each of the three views is held by people who are passionately concerned with peace and who would assent to the general affirmation about war quoted earlier. The Report goes on to say that it "cannot affirm that any one of these positions can be held to represent the only Christian attitude. The Church must insist that the perplexity itself is a sign of the sin in which its members are implicated. It cannot rest in permanent acquiescence in the continuance of these differences, but should do all that is possible to promote the study of the problem by people of different views meeting together to learn from one another as they seek to understand the purpose of God as revealed in Jesus Christ."

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, pp. 178-83.

Now that is precisely what most of us do not do. We prefer to get into groups of like-minded people and do the minimum of study and the maximum of mutual strengthening in prejudice. We have got to learn a new method of debate in which we not only defend what we genuinely hold to be true, on the basis of knowledge and faith, but also listen to those who differ from us.

" In time of war, as in time of peace, (the Church) should pray not only for the nation in which God has placed it, but also for the enemies of that nation. If Christians of warring nations pray according to the pattern of prayer given by their Lord, they will not be " praying against " one another. The Church should witness in word, in sacramental life, and in action to the reality of the Kingdom of God which transcends the world of nations. It should proclaim and obey the commandment of the Lord, ' Love your enemies.' " [1]

This passage contains a deep challenge to our whole faith. In a situation of acute conflict, when the sin of the world has broken in a wave of evil and violence, is prayer just hypocrisy, or merely wishful thinking (an escape from the horror into a world of make-believe), or is it the most positive and constructive action we can take? And if it is a sane and useful form of action in time of war, what has it to do with peace and the establishment of international order? We cannot follow this out fully here. It is a question that is quite basic to our whole Christian faith in God the Father, Creator, in God the Son, Redeemer, and in the

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 183.

Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life. Prayer belongs to a world—and only to a world—which is not forsaken by God and in which men are not isolated individuals, whose influence on one another is confined to those moments when they are in physical contact, but rather form one *personal* community, responsive and responsible to a Living God. Christian faith demands and makes possible concrete petition and intercession, not as a desperate extra effort when "all's lost—to prayers, to prayers," but as a necessary condition of any positive and abiding action. The trouble with most of us, Christians and non-Christians alike, is that we do not wholly believe in God, and are not reconciled to His Will. The root of disorder and war is in ourselves as well as in society.

From all this there emerge a few very simple but very important facts. First, that the existence and witness of the Church is quite central to the problem of international order, and therefore to the question of war and peace. Second, that the specific contribution of the Church is made by being truly the Church, and that the whole of her work—evangelism, education, worship—affects the issues raised in this chapter and is affected by them. Third, that no creative action is possible in this matter without such a deepening of faith as will banish fear from our minds—even the fear of war. Until we have looked quite frankly at the fact that war, under present circumstances, is at least as likely as peace, and yet found a faith that enables us to see that fact without fear, we cannot find that freedom of mind and heart that will make the

tackling of the great and tragic tasks that lie before us possible.

But that means that as Christians and as a Christian Church we are very far from being fit for the tasks laid upon us. Even within the Christian community itself there are barriers of race and nation, of class and prejudice to overcome. We are still all too easily indifferent to the fate of our fellow Christians in other Churches. We still need to be educated as members of one Universal Church and to find in that membership a dominant loyalty that tests all others. Above all, we are desperately lacking in the faith that will move these mountains of suspicion, pride and mutual distrust, and cast them into the sea.

Whether the Church will be able to play the part that is outlined for her in this sphere depends on whether the Church can be revived in faith and in the consciousness of being the Church, even in spite of division and imperfection. That in turn depends on the dedication of her members, and above all on the faithfulness, intelligence and courage of younger people, on whom the chief burden will fall, both of any final break in the precarious international order that exists and in the fashioning of something better. It is well, therefore, to turn in our next chapter to things concerning younger people directly in the sphere of education.

CHAPTER VII

BOND OR FREE ?

"THE fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Things have not changed much since Ezekiel wrote that. Youth still pays the price of the sins of its fathers. It is upon young people that the full force of revolution, war and unemployment falls. It is to young people that older people look with deep anxiety, wondering if they will remain faithful to the traditions of the fathers. They are the stuff out of which a new world may be built, and the power with which an old world may be destroyed. Any faith that would take root in the world must conquer the rising generation, and all powerful faiths, whether political or religious, know it. Give them the schools and the universities and the youth movements, and the future is theirs.

This has been especially true of the great revolutionary movements of the last thirty years. In Russia, Italy and Germany, as soon as the immediate stress of revolution was over, attention riveted itself on the problem of education. To stabilise a revolution you must breed a generation that is impervious to the ideas of the former régime ; you must get out of the position of having even a minority of citizens lukewarm, or hostile, to the

new order. You can do this as far as the older generation is concerned by the process now euphemistically known as "liquidation"; but unless you can secure a supply of ardent young enthusiasts for the new régime, you are not safe. There is a dangerous freedom in the human mind, an element of the uncertain. That must be tackled at its source.

Schools, Colleges and Youth Movements

So, in all countries where there has been a revolutionary change, the attempt to capture youth has proceeded in two stages. The first is a direct attack on the educational system as such. Schools and colleges and universities have to be remodelled according to a totally new pattern. In place of the old liberal tradition, with its emphasis on the intellect, you must place an education which trains people to believe in something. The older system was useful in forging a superb weapon in scientific knowledge, and especially psychology, but it put this weapon to no special use. So now it is grasped firmly by hands that know what they want to do with it, and made into the means whereby faith is communicated to young people. The State seeks to set education in such a relation to faith that learning regains human significance, and people begin again to know what their knowledge is *for*.

It is remarkable how the liberal tradition in education has gone down before this onslaught, and it is a fact that needs to be pondered. Why should all the enthusiasm of a former age cool so

rapidly, and disappear in the face of ideas and methods which contradict all it stood for?

The answer lies partly in the fact of social disintegration. Objective, liberal, free education is strong as long as the fundamental basis of society is unmoved, just as political discussion can be temperate and dignified as long as the deep presuppositions of the argument are the same on both sides. But once let the foundations of society be called in question, once let the standards and general assumptions of life be destroyed, and politics become bitter and education becomes meaningless. The great age of liberal democracy, which saw the stately arguments of Liberals and Conservatives, was possible because both sides held a common view of property; the argument now is more violent because it concerns that very property basis itself. So, too, liberal education can proceed and can be a noble and compelling thing, within an agreed framework of values, standards and authority; but if that framework dissolves, then the educational process slips loose from its moorings and becomes chaotic.

For centuries we have been living on the dwindling capital of the Christian tradition, and the framework has been, even if unconsciously, that of Christian standards. The post-war world, to a greater extent in some countries than in others, found itself masterless and without faith; there was no authority that need be obeyed, no standard that was not relative, no faith that was coercive and deeply related to people's lives. Education had become so departmentalised as to lose its

wholeness. Men were being trained in a little bit of knowledge, a subsection of a particular science, without being able to see the relation of that to any greater whole. No one who knows intimately the life of any great modern university, and knows the lives of students in it, can fail to have the gravest misgivings about an education that is without the government of any great faith. It is as if the "devil" of Christianity had been driven out, and the house was waiting, swept and garnished, for the intrusion of the "seven other devils" that must complete the story.

Such a situation can be met in two ways. It can be met by a religious revival that deeply and radically affects the whole life and thought of society; the dried-up springs of faith may be renewed from within the ancient tradition. But that has not happened; the Churches were not ready for it, were not even aware of the danger. So the alternative road was the only one left open. Political movements, taking on the form and attributes of religion and developing powerful myths as centres of allegiance and of faith, have taken the matter into their own hands. With all the armoury of scientific knowledge they have taken possession of education in many countries, giving young men and women what they could not find in the schools and universities and what they had long ceased to expect from the Church—knowledge and faith in close alliance. That is a dangerous thing; for the combination of science and myth makes the distinction between education and propaganda very hard to maintain, and the domin-

ance of myth[1] in the minds of those who are in control of the process makes the distinction meaningless.

The second stage in this process is the swing of attention away from the recognised organs of education, the school and the college, to the youth movements. That is the stage in which we now are, and it is so far advanced that in the revolutionary countries it is this much more supple weapon that is most highly prized. Associations of youth, on the basis of sport, and of service to the community, have been taken over and turned to serve the interests of the revolution. That has created a situation of great embarrassment for the Christian Churches, for it renders religious instruction almost impossible because of the pressure on young people's time. The Church is being squeezed out, dried up at its roots. And that not out of any open hostility very often to the Church, but because men feel that other things are much more important.

The only reason why this has happened more violently and more completely in some countries than in others is that the Christian heritage has been squandered to varying extents. The social disintegration of which we have spoken is less far advanced in some countries than in others. But the situation is lighted up with a red glare.

[1] I am using the word "myth" here, not in the popularly accepted sense of a "fairy-story," but in its true meaning. A myth is the presentation of the truth about life in dramatic form so that it becomes the focus of loyalty and of emotion. All ultimate truth in religion is of this form. What matters is whether the myth is true or false, or how true and how false.

Democracy and freedom grew out of Christian faith, and receive their meaning in Christian faith. The things we value in them, the things for which our forefathers in democratic countries lived and suffered and died, cannot be secured against decay by the mere forms of democracy and freedom. Education demands some kind of authority and some kind of faith; the young have the right to faith as well as to knowledge. You cannot just go on "unfolding as a flower" to no apparent purpose, and if the answer is not in Christian faith, then it will be found elsewhere. Sooner or later people will find some kind of a myth that seems concrete and real enough to be a basis for their lives, and in which they want their children to be nourished. And then a Church that is indifferent, or blind, to what is happening, that cannot get what it has to say expressed in terms that command attention and respect, will be swept aside—and rightly so.

The Response of Youth

"One of the characteristics of our time is the response made by youth to the appeal of political leaders who offer them a part in the building of the nation." [1] The response has been terrific. All healthy young people need something to believe, something to do, and a cause to live and die for. The so-called totalitarian countries have given them all three.

There is a terrible danger in this whole-hearted

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 144.

response of young people to the entirely this-worldly faiths of the modern world : for suppose these thousands of ardent young believers find one day that the whole splendid structure of their faith is in ruins ? Suppose these this-worldly faiths are unable to fulfil their promises ? Suppose they cannot fulfil them *because* they are entirely this-worldly ? The prospect is just terrifying ; so much so that none of them dare face it. Such a deception, on so great a scale, would leave this generation—or whatever generation discovered it to be deception—so bankrupt and exhausted that " social disintegration " is a mild term for what would happen. That is what makes the responsibility of the Church so terrible. For the Church knows this is what must happen unless these things can be redeemed and claimed for the Truth. The Church knows that man's life is not a thing of this world alone, and that to set your heart on the things of this world, even the great and noble things of this world, and on nothing else, is to build on sand. Knowing this, and knowing too, as she should, that this situation is in large measure her own fault, the result of her own faithlessness, what ought the Church to do ?

The Responsibility of the Church

What the Church can and should do will differ in practice from nation to nation. That was what made it so difficult for the section of the Oxford Conference which discussed the matter to come to clear and definite recommendations that were

valid for people in the whole world. But one thing that must be done is to awaken Christian people and Christian Churches to what is happening. This does not mean making their flesh creep with stories of what is happening in Russia, Germany or Italy. What is happening there is in many respects to be welcomed. It has unmasked an unreal situation, and although that may be very bad for Christians, it is good for the Church. It is an example of what must happen to society if Christian faith decays and leaves only the hollow forms of Christian principle to compete feebly for men's allegiance. Its significance is that it lights up our total situation as Christians in the world, and shows us clearly that the Christian perspective has gone out of life; and it shows us that the Church neglects education at her peril, and may come to a place where her own most intimate, most private education is rendered almost impossible because she has abdicated from the rest of human life.

Secondly, we must go very much deeper than the mere overhauling and modernising of the machinery of Christian education. We have got to ask, and ask earnestly, what *is* Christian education? On what does it depend? Who are its agents? What are its aims? When we do so, then we discover that nobody knows the answer to our questions, or there are as many different answers as there are people whom we ask. Christianity is a faith that claims to be true. Its truth is conveyed in the living "myth" of the Incarnation of the Son of God. It is, as we have already

noted, a totalitarian faith, claiming the whole man. What difference, except of content, is there between Christian education, with its interest in knowledge and in faith, and the forms of education we have been considering briefly above? Are they all just "propaganda masquerading as education"?

Freedom and Authority

The central issue in education is the question of freedom and authority. The problem is how to "secure conformity and produce creative types of personality."[1] The ideal of education in the liberal era has been the free growth of the human personality into freely accepted responsibility. But behind this has been, until recently, a framework of accepted standards of character and a tacitly agreed authority of the community. This, in many cases, has been so unconscious as to be denied; but it has been there, none the less. The totalitarian types of education seek to meet a situation where this background is no longer there, and all of them claim to act in the name of a new and truer freedom and in reaction against a false out-moded form of freedom. The whole point of the Russian experiment is that freedom will only become a reality in the classless society for which education should train men; and the German attitude is that freedom only has meaning in service to the national community. It cannot be too clearly realised that the kind of thing the liberal tradition has understood by freedom, when it is

[1] *The Churches Survey Their Task*, p. 142.

divorced from the Christian faith, is radically questioned as soon as men ask, "Well, freedom *for what*?" It is significant also that the experience of the communist, fascist and national-socialist countries is one of *liberation* of the individual from the intolerable burden of a freedom which had no purpose behind it.

The Christian Church will not meet the challenge of the present world until it is clear what Christian freedom really is. Is it just freedom to develop anyhow? Is it neutrality in education, the leaving of the young child free from all clear direction that springs from faith? What framework of authority, what basic assertions concerning man and the world, give Christian freedom meaning and power? "Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free." "Whose service is perfect freedom." These and other phrases indicate that there is more in Christian freedom than a mere neutral abstention from decision: it is freedom to choose your Lord, and freedom in the service of God.

In the meantime the Church has to produce and train men and women who will have what I once heard Martin Niemöller describe as "*die allerletzte Kraft*"—a quality which he himself has in such measure that he is known and respected all over the world. What is this quality? In the speech in which I heard him use the term, he described the periods in recent German history where men had reached a point of utter dereliction: the breakdown of the German armies after the war, the mad period of inflation when the mark

became daily more valueless. The people who kept any sort of dignity and sanity under these conditions, he said, were the people who had their faith rooted in things beyond their own fate, beyond even the fate of their nation or class, in the eternal reality of God. They had this "allerletzte Kraft," this ultimate courage amid disaster. They were able to sustain almost impossible tensions without giving way.

This kind of character is the product of living with people who have it. The Christian Church can never hope to educate her children otherwise than through her own life; the Christian family, the Christian congregation, the company of old and young who live in the strength of the eternal, the community in which the dominating reality is the presence of God, that is the means of Christian education in essence. All else—Sunday Schools, the part played by the clergy in public education (where they play any part at all), the instruction in Bible and doctrine children may get in day schools—all this is superficial and meaningless unless children grow up in a community of real faith, where the Gospel is simply and directly preached and heard.

But this kind of character has within it also, both the solution of the conflict between freedom and authority and also the only strength that will withstand the tension between man's instinct for freedom and the actual denial of that freedom in the world. In the last analysis it is only those whose roots are not in this world, whose horizon is wider than earthly existence, who have met and

outstared death because they know in Whose hands both life and death are held, it is only people of such a faith who can educate truly, who have that humility concerning their own powers and achievements and that sense of the absoluteness of God which give the child both stability and freedom; they can trust the child while daring to direct him.

Christian Youth Movements

The educational task of the Church is partly concerned with schools and colleges, and partly, perhaps much more, concerned with youth movements. It is a matter to thank God for that, in an age where the Christian family, even within the ranks of the Churches, is hard to find, there are associations of young people themselves who have their centre in loyalty to God in Christ and set themselves to discover Christian faith for themselves and together. If that great revival of Christian faith in which lies the only hope for the world is to come to us, it will be in no small measure because of the faithfulness and courage of those who belong to such movements amid the contempt of their contemporaries.

This little book is directed particularly to the members of such movements. It is an attempt to set before them some of the issues and some of the work of the Oxford Conference, and to start the ball rolling in preparation for the World Conference of Christian Youth to be held in 1939. It is therefore, in a sense, an offering from the older

generation to the younger, as if one should say, "Here is where we have got to. Take our results and study them. Improve on them if you can, for we know they are imperfect. We have not finished yet, but we invite you to come with us in this great adventure of thought and action which is the Christian life in the modern world."

CHAPTER VIII

THAT THEY GO FORWARD

In the service to which reference has been made in the first chapter, the Archbishop of Canterbury preached from the text : " Speak unto the Children of Israel, that they go forward." To those who had come from the humbling experience of the Oxford Conference, with its emphasis on what the Archbishop, in another address, called " ruthless honesty " in looking at the Church in the world, this came as a fitting climax. For in spite of the fact that the situation in which Christians stand in the world had appeared—as it may perhaps appear from this short survey—in dark colours ; in spite of the fact that we had seen the forces arrayed against Christianity as so formidable that, humanly speaking, it was inconceivable that the Church should count for much in the future of mankind ; in spite of the fact that we had wrestled with problems that were beyond our strength, the experience was not depressing. For the hope of the Church does not lie in itself, as a human institution, but in God. One of the preparatory leaflets spoke of the prime necessity as " faith in God born out of self-despair," and the note of conviction that dominated the closing service of the Conference was not one of confidence in our-

selves. The Church's greatest asset is not its extent or its organisation, but simply its Gospel. Therefore, the call that came from the Archbishop in the service in St Paul's was one we were fain to answer, just as it was a fitting beginning to the Edinburgh Conference that was still to meet.

There are, indeed, many things that filled the *Te Deum* that day with new meaning, as we looked round at the great congregation and remembered who they were and whence they came. The growth of a sense of membership in the *Una Sancta* among all denominations; the real feeling of belonging together, even amid division and misunderstanding; the fact that the Church is now, geographically, universal, and that living churches exist in places where there were none; the very awareness of shortcomings that had brought people from the ends of the earth to discuss, to listen, to pray together; the testimony of Christians, hard-pressed by an opposing world in countries where the faith is regarded as an enemy—all this and more lifted up the heart.

Yet while all this is true, there remains an obstinate contrast between the Church of Faith and the Churches as they are. By faith, and in experience, we had seen the Church emerging from the Churches, had seen the scattered Churches coming together in a common return to the feet of their Lord and being welded anew into the Church. And yet, we knew also that even the sharp distinction between the Church and the world, so easy and tempting to make in discussion, is blurred because the Churches are so

deeply invaded by the world. As Dr T. Z. Koo had said at the Oxford Conference, we were members of a secularised Church confronting a secularised society.

The message to the Christian Churches issued at the close of the Oxford Conference says: "We do not call the world to be like ourselves, for we are already too like the world." To recognise that and freely to admit it is at least a step forward, and it is all too true. To take but one example. The Church has a double aspect: it is on the one hand a society, or a series of societies, organised for worship, and it is, on the other hand, a body of men and women at work in the world under the dominion of a new outlook which they have learnt from Christ. Now, this very type of organisation is itself irrelevant and irritating to a secular civilisation. A society organised for the worship of God in Christ appears quite unimportant to masses of men and women around it. But not only so, it is puzzling even to Christians themselves; the forms and language of Christian worship have very largely become unmeaning to those who use them. Under the terrific pressure of a secular culture, each generation begins a little farther away from Christian symbols, and finds it a little more difficult to hold to the forms of Christian worship. The task of interpretation, of taking the language of faith, whether expressed in words or in liturgy, and relating it to the needs and activities of men in a complicated industrial age becomes more and more important and difficult. We are reaping the harvest of that departure from

Christian faith which began at the Renaissance and was accentuated by the Enlightenment, and which has built modern civilisation. These four hundred years have given us countless riches, have marked immense strides in human organisation and power, but the civilisation that has resulted has made belief in God, in any but a sentimental sense, appear absurd to the mass of mankind.

To what task are we then to "go forward"? First and foremost to the rediscovery of the Christian Gospel ourselves. Even the most excellent diagnosis is of small avail if there is no known cure. We are past-masters in analysis and diagnosis; but have we got a Gospel that is so true and urgent as to be arresting?

To find again, and to hold in its purity, a Gospel for mankind, in an age in which even the very elements of religion appear fantastic, is no light task in itself; but this is not all that we have to do. We have to interpret and implement the faith in the world, to build bridges between dogma and life that will enable the power of the Gospel to come home to the hearts and lives of our contemporaries in such manner as will revolutionise the world.

This double task will only be carried out if the total resources of the Christian Church are adequately mobilised. It is not a task for the clergy alone; it belongs to the clergy and laity together. Nor is it a task which the Churches can undertake in isolation from one another. Whether on a world scale, or nationally, or in the local parish, we need to learn from one another and to help one another; for our central need is the same,

whatever our tradition, namely, such a rebirth of living faith as will make effective our ineffectiveness; and our task is beyond the strength of all of us, while our hope is in the same God.

There is, of course, only one Gospel, given once and for all in Christ Jesus. Yet no mere return to orthodoxy will suffice. The living truth, by which the Church is constituted and which is its very life-blood, needs to come home to us with renewed power if it is to make impact on modern life. It has to take flesh and live in men and women, creating the same freedom, the same tensions, the same redeeming life as in the Early Church. The proclamation of the Gospel was a *Word made Flesh*, and there is no other language that is irresistible. Ideas can be argued about, and ideals can be set aside, but life is something that cannot be ignored.

Thus, the functioning of the Church in society is primarily the task of ordinary men and women, living their day to day lives amid all the contradiction of the modern world in a new spirit and with a new clarity, because they have come to know Christ. It is upon the men and women who are immersed in the practical affairs of life—the doctors, engineers, tradesmen, business men, labourers, teachers, lawyers, government servants—that the responsibility rests for changing the corporate life so that the challenges that now confront the Christian faith are adequately met and answered. It is they who have the inescapable burden of social and political choice, and it is in their lives that the tension between the affirmations of the

Church and the facts of a secular order are most acute. The Church functions through its members, or not at all.

Now, if all this is true, then the Church has a grave responsibility for seeing to it that her members have the help they so desperately need in carrying out their task in the world. At present that help is supplied through public worship and sacraments; through the clergy and pastoral work; through books and discussion groups. For this there is no substitute, but it may be permitted to doubt if it is adequate to the immense needs of the Church in the present crisis. These means may need to be supplemented. The difficulties of living as Christians in the modern world are so manifold and diverse, they vary so much according to vocation and employment, that the general ministry of public worship is hardly definite and concrete enough. By itself, it is not likely to close the gap that now exists between daily work and worship. Moreover, there are certain problems, such as the evangelisation of an unemployed community, or the effective witness of Christian faith inside a political party, which may call for more specialised gifts and methods. It may well be that special "ministries" are required for which men and women of special gifts should be set aside. To reach out into the life of a society as alienated from the language of religion as ours will call for strategy on the grand scale on the part of the leaders of the Churches, and for a clarity and devotion on the part of ordinary Christian people that are not easily come by.

To take one example, necessarily drawn from one country, and perhaps not directly applicable to others, the social life of the average mining village or small town in Great Britain has long ceased to be related in any living way to the Churches that are at work there. The real life of the community centres in Co-operatives, in Trade Unions, in Workers' Educational Associations, and in a number of secular and quasi-political organisations, and it is here that the real leadership of the working class community lies. The Churches exist, their members are very faithful, but they make little or no impact on the life round about them. To change that situation will demand much more than the continuance of the regular ministrations of the Churches. A whole series of bridges, at present almost wholly lacking, will have to be built between the life of the Churches and the life of the community. How is that to be done?

Apart altogether from the new responsibilities that may rest upon the Churches as organisations, and upon their leaders, the task set before us will not be achieved except through the creation of innumerable centres of Christian community, in which a few people band themselves together in common prayer and in deep wrestling with the truth, seeking in readiness of spirit to find the way in which they, as ordinary Christian people, may help to fulfil the task of the Church. On the analogy of the body, the Church should be a living, dynamic reality; and a body is made up of cells. Unless the work of the Oxford Conference is to

remain in the realm of the interesting suggestions of the "good and great," the findings need to be translated and tested by experiment. They represent the work of competent people, but they were none the less fallible and limited people. What they said may not be true, but it was sufficiently uncomfortable for it to be taken seriously. A beginning could be made by taking the main findings of each part of the Report, and asking: "Is this true, and if it is true, then what does it mean for me, in my actual situation? What should it mean for my church and for my congregation?"

In all this the amount that can be done from above, or through organisation, is strictly limited. You cannot organise the revival of living religion on the immense scale which alone can save the world. We can only be aware of the facts, and be open to the leading of God. We do not know what is in His purpose for the world we have inherited and which we now make. In some countries the mask has fallen, and the illusion of a Christian world has been destroyed: the Church is revealed in all its poverty, confronted by an organised power the like of which has never been seen before. In other countries the illusion still lingers, or is, perhaps, not quite wholly illusion: the "Corpus Christianum" still has some reality. It may be that the will of God is the complete unmasking of a situation that has become false and misleading, so that the Church knows itself to be "a little Flock," and knows the world to be hostile. It may be, as we suggested earlier, that martyrdom is the only language the world will

understand. We do not know. But when Jesus stood before Pilate, the Christian Church stood before the organised power of the Roman Empire. "Knowest thou not," said Pilate, "that I have power to crucify thee and power to release thee?" And Jesus said: "Thou wouldest have no power over me unless it had been given thee from above." His Body has stood so through the centuries. In so far as it has been true to Him, it has held high the same faith—that even the powers that were about to destroy were still in the hands of God the Father, and could do nothing apart from Him. If the Church is to serve God in this generation, it will only be in the same faith.

APPENDIX

THE LITERATURE OF THE CONFERENCE

I. Basic Material

The Church and its Function in Society. J. H. Oldham and W. A. Visser 't Hooft. (Allen and Unwin, 8s. 6d.)

The Churches Survey Their Task. Edited by J. H. Oldham. (Allen and Unwin, 5s.)

II. Supplementary Material

The following books are published by Allen and Unwin. The price per individual copy is 8s. 6d., and the set of six can be obtained at 30s.

(*a*) On Underlying Principles:

The Christian Understanding of Man.

The Kingdom of God and History.

The Christian Faith and the Common Life.

(*b*) On Specific Subjects of the Oxford Conference:

The Church and the Community.

Church, Community and State in relation to Education.

The Universal Church and the World of Nations.

III

The following books, published by other publishers, are also part of the Conference material.

(*a*) On Underlying Principles :

Revelation. A symposium edited by John Baillie and Hugh Martin. (Faber and Faber, 7s. 6d.)

(*b*) On Specific Subjects :

Christian Faith and the Modern State. Nils Ehrenström. (S.C.M. Press, 6s.)

All these, with the exception of the first two and the last, are symposia. All of them contain invaluable material for further study.

Printed by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh

280.242
F 36 t
copy 1